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Kosmologie a exil na dvoře Jamato

Cosmology and Exile in the Wider Yamato Court

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Poděkování

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Prohlášení:

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Klíčová slova (česky)

Japonsko, Yamato, sociální antropologie, Mary Douglas, Kodžiki, Nihonšoki, strukturalismus

Klíčová slova (anglicky):

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Abstrakt (česky)

Tato práce má dva cíle. V první části se pokusím porozumět japonské společnosti na přelomu 7. a 8. století (období Asuka a počátek Nary) za pomoci teorie britské antropoložky Mary Douglas. Má analýza historie, společenské organizace, náboženství a kosmologie vychází z kronik, které byly v těchto obdobích sepsány a jež reprezentují světonázor císařské rodiny státu Jamato, snažícího se udržet si prominentní postavení mezi mnoha státními útvary té doby. Docházím k závěru, že aristokratické prostředí tohoto státu bylo poměrně nestabilní, konkurenční a poněkud individualistické.

Mytologické sekvence nejstarších dochovaných japonských kronik budou předmětem strukturální analýzy v druhé části práce. Znalosti získané během části první mi pomohou vidět v motivu exilu překlenutí základního problému konkurenční společnosti, totiž nutnosti určité krutosti a také transgresivity u člověka, který se má stát císařem. Jakožto císař pak však tato osoba představuje strukturu par excellence a musí být opakem transgrese, a tak je to právě během pobytu v exilu, kdy původně ambivalentní postava získává přijatelnou formu.

Každá z kronik zachází s tímto problémem trochu jinak: V jedné (Kodžiki) se exil využívá pro integraci periferie, zatímco v druhé (Nihonšoki) k žádné integraci nedochází. Ačkoliv tedy texty pocházejí ze stejného kulturního prostředí, nabízejí rozdílné strategie sebepojetí a sebechápání.

Abstract (in English):

The aim of this paper is twofold. In the first part I try to understand the society of Japan around the turn of the 7th and 8th centuries (Asuka to early Nara periods) with the help of a model proposed by Mary Douglas. This analysis is concerned with history, social organization, religion and the cosmology found in the chronicles it produced. These chronicles represent the world-view of the imperial family of the Yamato state, which was one of many in Early Japan. I conclude that the social reality of the aristocracy of this state was rather unstable, competitive and somewhat individualistic.

In the second part I analyze myth sequences from these earliest extant Japanese chronicles. In this structural analysis I employ the knowledge gathered in the first part. It enables me to read the motif of exile as bridging a fundamental problem in a competitive society. Namely, in order for a person to become an emperor, he has to be fierce and

transgressive. However as an emperor, the same person represents structure par excellence and has to be the opposite of transgression. While in exile, the formerly ambivalent character transforms into an acceptable form.

The study of two chronicles yields two results. In one chronicle (Kojiki) the exile is used to integrate a periphery, but in the other (Nihon Shoki) no integration occurs. Thus, while the texts clearly originate in the same cultural milieu, they offer differing attempts at a self-conceptualization by their authors.

Contents

1. Introduction

Narratives of exile have shaped the imaginations and the lives of the early Japanese. These stories were so widespread that a 20th century Japanese scholar even created a genre for them.[1] The famous story of *Susano-wo*'s banishment from the Heavenly Realm is a paradigmatic example found in the oldest extant literary work composed on the Japanese islands. But exile was also a common enough feature of the lives of the Yamato aristocracy.[2] Some of these did not return while they were alive, but narratives recorded in the latter part of the 8th century state that such dead returned to haunt their homes as *onryō* (vengeful spirits).What is common both to the narratives of exile found in the early 8th century *Kojiki* and those in the late 8th century *Shoku Nihongi*, is that the wanderer undergoes a transformation during their sojourn in the periphery. In this paper I try to shed light on the imagination of exile in the early chronicles by situating them in their socio-cultural context.

Ancient Japanese were, like all societies, situated in time and space. The same applies to the literary works they produced. The mythologies a contemporary reader encounters in these texts share narrative motifs with a wider culture, but they have to be taken as particular variants of these. Such ideal imaginations are thus representations of a society how it like to have itself seen. These literary works are infused by continental thoughts and practices. Indeed, hybridization is a common trait of cultures, since "if two symbolic systems are confronted, they begin to form, even by their opposition, a single whole."[3] For the chronicles are attempts at negotiating new forms of a symbolic system drawn from various sources. Surprisingly, the goal of amending false narratives according to the correct ones possessed by the court is explicitly stated in the preface to the Kojiki. Any notion of an existence of a correct version of a myth or a genealogy has to be rejected

[1] Jonathan Stockdale, "Susano-o, Orikuchi Shinobu, and the Imagination of Exile in Early Japan", *History of Religions* 52.3 (2013): 236–266, p. 239.

[2] Herman Ooms, *Imperial Politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan: The Tenmu Dynasty, 650–800*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, p. xix.

[3] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*, with a new introduction, New York: Routledge, 2003, (1996[3], 1970[1]), p. 43.

if one is to read the other chronicle compiled shortly after this oldest extant work, namely the *Nihon Shoki*. It is almost unique in that it presents many variants of a mythological narrative. Although these two works, the ones I will study on the following pages, have been produced almost contemporaneously, they contain differences that are "not merely a matter of literary style, but extend to basic worldviews."[4] The purpose of the chronicles, as stated in the preface of the Kojiki, is the advancement of the imperial lineage's own history of legitimation within the aristocracy of the Yamato state.

The times during which the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki were composed were marked by a history of instability, which was to continue well into later periods during which the status of these written records had changed. These early literary works are in effect myth-histories aimed at legitimating the imperial lineage's rule. Many characterize the chronicles as an "integrative mythology".[5] To understand the society which produced these texts, which until recently were constructed as works representing the timeless mythological truths of an uncontaminated Japanese identity; I will for the most part draw from the works of the renowned social anthropologist Mary Douglas.[6] Her work is characterized by the attempt to correlate sociological reality with cosmology. According to her, human beings are social animals and as such are always part of a structured group with external boundaries.[7] An individual that does not encounter strong boundaries in their everyday lives is part of a situation called "weak group", one that encounters very strong boundaries and pressures to remain within these finds him- or herself in a "strong group". Grid measures the degree to which society prescribes the possibilities of an individual to decide over himself. If an individual is subject to few rules, he acts in a situation of "low grid". If there are many rules of conduct and communication, it is a "high grid" situation. Cultures can be classified on the basis of these distinctions, which describe how an individual can

[4] Jun'ichi Isomae, *Japanese Mythology: Hermeneutics on Scripture, t*r. By Mukund Subramanian, London & Oakville, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2010*,* p. 63.

[5] e.g. Joan R. Piggott, "Sacral Kingship and Confederacy in Early Izumo", *Monumenta Nipponica* 44.1 (1989): 45–74.

[6] I here use the method as presented in her essay "Cultural Bias". (Mary Douglas, "Cultural Bias", in M. Douglas (ed.) *In the Active Voice*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p. 183–254.)

[7] The version of "Natural Symbols" I reference is the 3rd edition, which is closest to the aforementioned essay.

act in a society. A society will rarely fall squarely into one of these types. Rather it will show some characteristics that might fall into different types, while some aspects will be more pronounced than others. The larger the society, the more problematic a general characterization along clear types. Importantly then the social experience of an individual within a culture can differ significantly and a early Japanese peasant would score differently in these categories than would a member of a peripheral aristocracy. An individual then will interpret the world according to a cosmology that in some form justifies his own situation. But an individual can also, to a certain degree, change positions within a society and entertain cosmologies, which he perceives as advancing his own needs, "for the cognitive activity of the real live individual is largely devoted to building the culture, patching it here and trimming it there, according to the exigencies of the day."[8] Should such an individual have access to means of communication, which supersede his immediate social context, his power to shape a society becomes stronger. Among the most powerful is the medium of writing in which a cosmology can be imagined, which will can have an impact on societies removed in time and space. Such imaginations happen within certain limits, as they have to harmonize in some respect with the society the person encounters.

I am here concerned with the Japanese imperial lineage of the 7th and 8th centuries, as well as the then-current aristocracy. In the first part of this paper I will show the dominant social configurations found in this part of early Japanese society. The use of social anthropology in understanding culture and religion of Early Japan has to my knowledge never been attempted. As such this first foray will hardly be faultless. Nevertheless I believe that it will expand an understanding of the times in which the groundwork for the later development of Japanese society was laid.

I will show that the Yamato court could be characterized as oscillating between two poles. The social reality appears to have been a "low grid, weak group" type of situation, in which individuals of both genders made use of their own powers and knowledge to manipulate the symbolic system in ways that would advance their positions. As they had to adhere to some rules laid out by tradition, they were not entirely free of stratification. Yet, because it was apparently common to bend these rules to one's own advantage, an

[8] Douglas, "Cultural Bias", p. 189.

individual was rather free. This highly competitive environment was one in which clans were trying to hold on to their old privileges in face of continuing attempts at centralization. The imperial lineage, which by then was the strongest clan, instigated reforms to secure their own position modeled on the Chinese legal system. They aimed to create a highly hierarchical and ritualized society, to which they would preside. The Yamato society of these times was not averse to ritual, but as I will show, ritual was highly localized and clan-specific. The problem then was one of attaching the diverse rituals and traditions onto those of the imperial lineage. The tension between these two poles however was not only located in the destabilizing powers of the clans. Because the Japanese imperial family had no concept of clearly defined succession to the throne, the lineage itself had to wrestle with the centripetal forces carried by princes eager to gain the most power.

Early Japan was a society which appears to have been very open to foreign cultures, especially those of China and the Korean kingdoms. In the latter part of this paper, I will analyze narratives of exile found in the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki. These two works are the products of the imperial family's attempts to create symbols that would bridge the disparate interests of other members of the Yamato aristocracy. The imagination of exile, I believe, is important in the understanding of the openness encountered in those early days of Japanese polity. I also want to make clear that the producers of these literary works cannot be taken as representative of the whole of Japan, as the described society is doubtlessly one that was very heterogeneous. This work takes as its central focus the motif of exile as found in the two myth-histories and descriptions will serve their contextualization and subsequent interpretation.

2. Culture and Society in Early Japan

In this section it is my goal to define the location of the Yamato court within the diversified cultural landscape of 7th and 8th century Japan. Contextualization by means of a historical account is important, for the social reality "consists of social action, a deposit from myriads of individual decisions made in the past."[9] These were times of great changes for the court and the texts they produced were not only intended to have a legitimating function vis-à-vis other lineages and possibly even peasants, but also for the ruling family itself. The myth-histories were to serve as a bridge between the constitutive memory of the state and the disparate memory of the clans.[10] I will here describe the era of great changes and upheavals, which preceded the composition of the chronicles and continued even after they had been written down. The cosmos the members of the clans lived in is not very different from the one Mary Douglas describes for a "low grid, weak group" society: A Yamato aristocrat of those times can be said to have lived "in a world of noble pacts, hard bargains, dastardly betrayals and revenges."[11]

2.1. A Society in History

The inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago, which came to form the Japanese people of today, were organized into clans led by chieftains. During the *Kofun* era (250–538) a chieftain's power derived from their their prominent position as mediators or 'shamans', supported by their lineages going back to locally important *kami* (deity).[12] These clans had mostly local relevance, even though there seems to have been a certain dynamic at play, as different clans managed to secure cultural hegemony over different regions at varying times. Chinese visitors at those times encountered such small states (*kuni*) and

[9] Ibid., p. 190.

[10] Isomae, *Japanese Mythology*, p. 23.

[11] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, p. 70.

[12] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "The Emperor of Japan as Deity (Kami)", *Ethnology* 30.3 (1991): 199–215, p. 208.

reported that civil wars were not uncommon.[13] The Yamato confederacy emerged during this era. Before the *Taika* reform of 645, when a Chinese-style organization was introduced, the Yamato society was already divided into three groups and had a clearly designated leader. The *uji* clans formed the upper class, whose head was *uji no kami*, a priest. The *be* corporations or 'worker communities' were bound to the ruling clans and their areas of responsibility were handicraft, agriculture or war service. *Yatsuko* were found at the bottom of the social spectrum, were de facto slaves and represented only a small part of the population.[14] Members of each of these groups would have perceived their respective social realities rather differently. The clan which later became the imperial family formed the Yamato court together with the uji aristocracy, which kept its titles even after the reforms of 645. There had thus been many differently organized groups in the society of the Yamato state, which had different possibilities and orientations in their lives and thus presumably had differing mythological narratives and rituals. Of these little is known. The political and societal reality in the other known powerful authority in 6th century Japan was somewhat different. *Izumo* was a confederation of different ruling clans without a Great King like there was in Yamato.[15] Nevertheless it gradually became incorporated into the strengthening Yamato state, at first as a confederate and later as a province. Narratives from such provinces form the *Fudoki*, a chronicle in which varying sources are compiled and which differs from what one finds in the literary works representing the Yamato court.[16] There had been a steady increase in trade with the continent in many parts of the Japanese islands.[17] Trade was accompanied by immigration, especially from China and Korea.[18] These migrants brought with them new technologies and rituals. Above all, it was through them that Buddhist, Daoist and Confucianist principles were introduced into the clan-based and shamanistic states of the archipelago. As craftsmen with superior

[13] Piggott, "Sacral Kingship", p. 50.

[14] Klaus Antoni, "Izumo as the 'Other Japan': Construction vs. Reality", *Japanese Religions* 30.1-2 (2005):1–20, p. 3.

[15] Piggott, "Sacral Kingship", p. 60.

[16] Isomae, "Myth in Metamorphosis", p. 366.

[17] Piggott, "Sacral Kingship", p. 57.

[18] Robert S. Ellwood, "A Cargo-Cult in Seventh Century Japan", *History of Religions* 23.3 (1984): 222–239, p. 230.

technologies such migrants became important and influential parts of the society, wielding hereditary titles, even though they were "never quite secure of their place in Japanese society, and therefore dependent on court favors".[19] The Yamato society appears to have been rather open toward foreigners, at least toward those that appeared to be able.[20] Nevertheless it was also somewhat stratified by tradition, as the uncertain status of migrants shows. This tradition was enforced by clans which had ritual prerogatives that ensured their importance and wealth within the system. The members of *uji* clans were engaged in constant struggles, physical and symbolic, to secure the privileges they had acquired in the past. Centuries later these immigrant clans of craftsmen, missionary priests and magical practitioners have been absorbed by the symbolic system.

"During the last decades of the seventh century, the Yamato kingdom, which had been ruled by unstable coalitions of lineages whose leaders acknowledged one among themselves as their head, was transformed into a rapidly centralizing state led by an 'emperor' (*tennō*) who extended his rule through a service nobility recruited from old lineage leadership."[21] The hegemony of what later became the imperial lineage was then not at all secure, as it took part in the same struggles as the other clans, even if from a position of even greater privilege. The famous and influential *Soga* clan sought to unsuccessfully dominate the budding Yamato state at the turn of the 6th century. The most influential members of this clan were slain in a coup d'état in 644 led by a coalition between a prince and other clans.[22] However, before they were defeated, they were according to the Nihon shoki "on the verge of displacing the Yamato sun line of 'great kings'."[23] The Soga clan was instrumental in the compilation of the first Japanese myth-histories, the *Kokki* and the *Tennōki*. While the two texts were almost completely destroyed in the coup, their alleged existence sheds a different light on the later chronicles. These works were without a doubt contested cultural products, even if they were based on a

[19] Ibid., p. 231.

[20] Dangerous deities were often subdued with the help of immigrants, who possessed knowledge of continental rites. (John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A Brief History of Shinto*, Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, p. 72.)

[21] Ooms, *Imperial Politics*, p. xv.

[22] Ellwood, "Cargo-Cult", p. 225.

[23] Ooms, *Imperial Politics*, p. 3.

common treasure trove of narratives found among the populace of the islands. Such narratives were maintained by clans and were classified as either *teiki* (Imperial Records) or *kuji* (Ancient Myths). It is impossible to say from which sources the Kojiki was in the end compiled.[24] This data supports the notion that the Yamato elite was a highly competitive and rapidly changing society.

This watershed event of the coup d'état was followed by the introduction of the *ritsuryō* system. These far-reaching reforms introduced a bureaucratic state based on Chinese penal and administrative law codes. The reform was not an egalitarian one, as the elite clans were those to be appointed to the established offices. The sphere of influence of the court was at the time "enabled via a vertically oriented organization that assumed a strong sense of political independence, which each clan upheld."[25] This secured the paramount position of the imperial lineage, while keeping the clans in a competitive state for court favors and titles. Additionally, state rituals at shrines of different kami became ever more prominent, as they were to legitimize the still contested hegemony of the imperial lineage and thus create a common discursive space of memories for the disparate clan traditions. This "*jingi* cult consisted of a broad range of ceremonies. The main aims of *jingi* rituals were securing rain and averting pests to obtain a good harvest; quelling disease among the populace; protecting the state from rebellion and invasion; and guaranteeing the health and safety of the emperor, the palace, and the capital."[26] The reforms did not bring about a perhaps hoped for stability. "As times moved into the reign of Emperors *Tenchi* and *Tenmu*, in light of the defeat of the Japanese forces by the Chinese and Silla allied forces in the Battle of *Hakusonko* (663), and with the destabilization of the system of domination by territorial chieftains (among other developments), a crisis in both international frontiers and domestic arena threatened the continuation of the clan system and the Yamato kingdom that embraced it."[27] At the same time the new symbolic construct of the *tenka* regime appeared. This imagined the realm as extending beyond the borders of Yamato and as acknowledged by outsiders.[28] After this, a war among the emperor's

[24] Isomae, *Hermeneutics on Scripture,* p. 41.
[25] Ibid., p. 53.

[26] Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 32.

[27] Ibid., p. 54.

[28] Ooms, *Imperial Politics*, p. 36.

possible successors broke out. This so-called *Jinshin* war was waged between the son of emperor Tenji and the emperor's brother, who succeeded to take the throne as emperor Tenmu. He is the emperor who instigated the writing of the Kojiki. The dispute arose because the reigning emperor changed his mind about who was to be his successor. Because of this none of the potential candidates had enough symbolic power to secure the throne, leading to war between two factions. Despite a bureaucratic state organization, in-clan disputes continued to pose a threat to the stability of the expanding Yamato state. Succession was to be won. The possible candidates were many, especially as it was still common for empresses to take the throne. "Power was realized only if one could achieve and maintain a consensus concerning the legitimacy of the relative distribution of position and prestige within the court. One way to improve one's status was, of course, to eliminate selected others who occupied crucial contiguous positions that might enable them to block one's own ambitions."[29]

I hope to have delineated the social basis of the Yamato court, to have shown its instability, the constant appropriation and reformulation of meaning in texts and laid down grounds for a generalization based on the character of this society. According to Mary Douglas, it would appear that the Japanese archipelago during the Kofun period was one where the "low grid, weak group" organization was dominant, although it came to produce "high grid, weak group" societies at its periphery.[30] This society had for a long time been open to all things foreign, even after hierarchical differentiation appeared as some gained significantly more power than others. Due to a variety of reasons not discussed here, the court's ideology came to be influenced by concepts of government originating in China. One of the uses of adopting a hierarchical symbolic system was to secure the imperial lineage's hegemony. The changes entailed by restructuring the forms of communication and imagined distribution of power were to push the court society into a "high grid, strong group" type of organization. The power of the clans was probably not sought to be broken (the lingering memory of the unsuccessful Soga clan was still present). Thus the Taika reform was partly designed to retain the highly competitive situation under the imperial

[29] Gary L. Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 237.

[30] See e.g. Ellwood, "Cargo-Cult".

clan's hegemony. However even after this "Great Reform", revisions were made continuously.[31] This more hierarchical structure was to be renegotiated time and time again in order to not fall apart. The continuing political struggles within the court in the latter part of the 7th century testify to the competition common even within the imperial family. Such a highly volatile atmosphere resulted in a situation in which there were hundreds of political exiles.[32] The lower strata of this society (peasants, commoners, slaves) did perhaps retain cosmologies harking back to times when social stratification had not yet been too pronounced, but because there are no traces of their cultural products to be found, it is impossible to know. They formed the economic basis of the state, which was built on their labors. Almost certainly however they would have oscillated between a high grid and low grid social organization, while the strength of group could have differed significantly according to geographical variation.[33] Importantly, there is no evidence that commoners were informed about either the chronicles or even later, Heian-era commentaries.[34] The higher strata of the Yamato court and those who had the symbolic means to partake in it, would have oscillated more between a low grid, weak group and a high grid, strong group type of organization. The former being closer to lived reality, the latter found in institutions. This structure disintegrated in the latter Heian period.[35]

2.2. Religious Life in Early Japan

This social organization had a variety of "religious" concepts at their hands, the use of which underwent changes, as did the society and the wealth of which increased with the incorporation of continental systems of thoughts and symbols. While the influence of Chinese thought is noticeable in the myth-histories, most of the narratives employ images

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[31] See e.g. David T. Bialock, *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories Narrative, Ritual, and Royal Authority from The Chronicles of Japan to The Tale of the Heike*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 48 ff.

[32] Ooms, *Imperial Politics*, p. xix.

[33] Taryo Obayashi, "*Uji* Society and *Ie* Society from Prehistory to Medieval Times," *The Society of Japanese Studies* 11.1 (1985): 3–27, p. 27.

[34] Isomae, *Hermeneutics on Scripture*, p. 20.

[35] Jun'ichi Isomae, "Myth in Metamorphosis: Ancient and Medieval Versions of the Yamatotakeru Legend", *Monumenta Nipponica* 54.3. (1999): 361–385, p. 37.

of indigenous origins.[36] Here I will offer only a brief outline of some of the practices and concepts, which tend to be subsumed under the label *Shinto*, which itself is a category created centuries later. The kami can be called deities, even as they would better fit the broader concept of 'spiritual power'. I use kami and deity as synonyms, because I write about textual sources dealing with mythical and historical narratives, for which the distinction between deity and spiritual power is not necessary to be made. These kami are spread around the world and are not stable entities. They are "potent, pure, and essentially nonpersonalized."[37] One might even say that they "tend to be bizarre, dislocated or diffuse in their presence."[38] They can however also be personalized, mostly anthropomorphic deities as witnessed in the chronicles. Such important kami are rather well delineated, at least in comparison with the myriads populating the Japanese cultural topography. Their "existence" is conditioned by purity and human actions. The undefinable and essentially open-ended quality of how and in what forms kami may appear, makes them very malleable and fits in well with spiritual forces found in "low grid, weak group" types of societies.[39] Also, the "*kami have been both human and super-human* requiring a complex and fluid application of the sacred and profane opposition."[40] The continuum between humans and deities found in the chronicles is particularly striking.

The topography of the phenomenal world was littered with shrines, most of them "open-air sites of seasonal worship"[41] located at the borders between the human realm of agriculture and the chaos behind it.[42] A part of these was integrated in the official state cult *(jingi*). For the majority of shrines however there is little information to be found, as they

[36] The division made between heavenly and earthly deities however is decidedly Confucian (Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 27).

[37] Michael Ashkenazi, *The Handbook of Japanese Mythology*. Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2003, p. 187.

[38] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, p. 154.

[39] Kami however remained important even after the Japanese social organization underwent radical changes. I do not want to suggest that a concept such as the kami may be of use only in individualized societies. What I here infer is that the origins of this type of numinous power possibly lie in an ancient Japanese society, which was yet to become stratified. "Deities have have always been at the mercy of human manipulation. Japanese have throughout history shaped and reshaped their pantheon, by (re)assigning functions according to changes in society" (Ohnuki-Tierney, "Emperor as Kami", p. 208).

[40] Ohnuki-Tierney, "Emperor as Kami," p. 208.

[41] Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 24.

were never part of the official cult. Because they were temporary constructions, shrines could appear and disappear quickly.[43] These sacred sites contained objects, which were the points of contact for the divine with the earth. Areas such as these were enclosed and "purified at the times of offerings by a ritual which bears striking resemblance to the rituals which, in ancient Japan, marked the possession of new land and the establishment of its boundaries with bindings (musubi)."[44] Newly claimed land was thus to be secured by a link with home. Harvest rituals had been important since the most ancient times. There is substantial textual evidence for the emperor being of prime importance for harvesting rituals, which were to rejuvenate his powers and those of the crops.[45] Rituals became highly formalized under the emerging Yamato state, even if local ritual experts continued to thrive independently of the court.[46] How the mythical narratives as appropriated by different clans relate to rituals is seldom clearly understood. It is known that rituals in the provinces were by official decree made to resemble those of the Yamato court after the Taika reform.[47] Because of that, it can be presumed that both mythical narratives and systems of rites differed between the disparate groups making up the then-current society.[48]

2.3. The Chronicles and Their Authors

The chronicles are the earliest extant literary works produced on the Japanese islands. While generally thought of as mythological texts, they present themselves as historical chronicles. As mentioned before, it is certain that the authors drew from now lost older texts and from oral sources. Traces of the lost works make their way into both of the

[42] This agricultural cosmology appears to part of the common peasant's religious landscape. The aristocracy presumably attended only great shrines and had a different concept of borders, as seen in the myth-histories I will analyze later. Clearly delineated borders are not to be found in the literary works produced for the aristocracy.

[43] Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 39.

[44] Allan G. Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions," *History of Religions* 21.3 (1982): 195–221, p. 197.

[45] Ohnuki-Tierney, "Emperor as Kami", p. 200.

[46] Ashkenazi, *Handbook*, p. 31.

[47] Piggott, "Early Izumo," p. 66.

[48] Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 137.

official myth-histories of the early 8th century. Importantly however, "records that were not used, left alone as they were, had a mea+ger possibility of being transmitted to later generations. The *Suishu* (Book of the Sui dynasty; article on the country of Japan, in the section on 'Eastern Barbarians') suggests, however that records which differed from the content of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* existed during the Yamato reign under Empress Suiko, from the late sixth century to the early seventh century."[49] But even given the official status of the extant chronicles and the court's attempts to employ "certain paradigmatic narratives that are made to serve as interpretive frames in its historiographic project,"[50] the Nihon Shoki records the traditions of a larger number of aristocratic families, presumably also of the losing sides in the struggles. Despite such significant differences between the official court chronicles, they are without a doubt products of a authors sharing the same symbolic system.

The Kojiki as the older of the two texts was commissioned by Emperor Tenmu in 673. It was not committed to its final form until 712 under Empress *Gemmei*. *Hieda no Are* was designated by the emperor as the oral reciter whose knowledge was to form the Kojiki. The sources of his knowledge are uncertain, as he could have had memorized written texts and recited these, or drawn his knowledge solely from an orally recited tradition. Literacy was not unknown to the court, but still rather limited, and it was allegedly Korean scribes who wrote the text.[51] Whatever the case, the text was picked up only in 711 by the editor *Ō no Yasumaro*. This information is contained in the Kojiki's preface. The textual history of the Nihon Shoki is less well known.[52] The writing was probably commissioned by Empress Gemmei in 714, two years after the Kojiki was finished. Its main compiler seems to have been Prince *Toneri* and the text was delivered to Empress *Genshō* in 720. Both of the texts then have been compiled over longer stretches of time and were compiled from different sources. The integration of various clan-based narratives was to be a symbolic bridge between the imperial family's claim to power through memory and that of the clans. However neither of the texts was especially popular or widely circulated in early Japan.

[49] Isomae, "Myth in Metamorphosis," p. 56.

[50] Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 238.

[51] Breen and Teeuwen, *History*, p. 28.

[52] Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 9.

The Kojiki was not even mentioned in a late 8th century chronicle.[53] This is a testimony to both the fluid nature of the Yamato court society and the limited success of the compilers to contextualize common mythical motifs into a widely acceptable framework.

These literary works were written with a ritual and thus performative context in mind.[54] Indeed there are many pieces in them which clearly originate in an "oral performative context".[55] The intended audience was the court nobility, who still had the freedom to appropriate the contents idiosyncratically. As the power relations in the Yamato state changed and the Kojiki lost significance, clans began to have commentaries to the Nihon Shoki written. Even as this chronicle retained its importance during the Heian period, the changed society found own interpretive strategies, which most likely yield different cosmologies and issues than a close reading of the early 8th century text offers.[56] Importantly one must keep in mind that "no single text presents the entire worldview of a culture or reveals the totality of the symbolic universe at the time of its genesis."[57] But it is precisely a recontexualization and actualization of a part of the symbolic universe in texts that enables a structural analysis. Such an analysis "rests on the presumption that the whole of the text as we now have it *regardless of the varying historical origins of its component parts* may properly be treated as a unity."[58] The court narratives present myth and history as their creators, namely representatives of the imperial lineage, believed or wanted to believe to have happened. While wider parts of the Yamato court may have agreed on parts of what was fixed in words, many have not, indeed history shows that most have not. Should any patterned structures appear intelligible in the somewhat chaotic bodies of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki, then they will pertain to issues that this particular clan attempted to reconcile.

[53] Ooms, *Imperial Politics*, p. xv.

[54] Breen and Teeuwen, *History*, p. 31.

[55] Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 8.

[56] Isomae, *Hermeneutics on Scripture*, p. 20.

[57] Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry*, p. 11.

[58] Leach, Edmund. *Genesis as Myth and other Essays*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1969, p. 45.

2.4. Cosmology

Information about the cosmologies of the Ancient Japanese, which is still accessible today, is mostly sourced from the two chronicles. As I have stressed, the myth-histories make use of shared narratives but insert them into differing interpretive frameworks. Their symbolic systems can thus entail differing meanings for the employed motifs. Since I am here concerned with these paradigmatic narratives, I will give a short overview of the cosmology as presented in them.

The Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki present many alternative versions of stories and even more variants of names. Yet the world the characters inhabit is very similar. Heavenly kami inhabit the High Heavenly Plain *(Takamagahara*). While presumably there are many abodes for the kami, only the halls of Amaterasu are described, because in them a story plays out. The heavenly deities at times assemble in the bed of a heavenly river which has been dammed. When disputes arise, the deities decide on a solution by consensus. The boundary between the heavenly and earthly realms is a shallow stream. Standing on the Heavenly Floating Bridge two deities, *Izanagi* and *Izanami,* created the earth by stirring formless waters. The bridge joins the two realms. That its precise nature remains undisclosed is hardly surprising. The myth-histories are more concerned with actions and genealogies than they are with fleshing out cosmological matters. A crossroads from which one road leads to heaven and one to earth is also mentioned, although it is impossible to tell if it is actually located in heaven. Rice paddies and dikes are also found in Takamagahara. From these few descriptions a reader gains the impression that the High Heavenly Plain would not differ visually from the earthly realm. Also, little emphasis is laid on borders.

Earth is inhabited by earthly kami, some of which are descendants of the heavenly deities. There is also the sea, which preceded land. Earth is composed of many islands. “The topography here is that familiar to us from modern Japan, though names have changed and many places are identified very doubtfully.”[59] In both myth-histories mention is made of the Korean peninsula, especially of Silla and Paekche, two major kingdoms in

[59]Asheknazi, *Handbook*, p. 103.

then-contemporary Korea. Of the Japanese polities/provinces, Izumo is of central importance. Many other provinces and peoples are mentioned. Especially in the Kojiki it is the site on which many narratives play out. The realm of the sea is ruled by a (sea) deity. While earth is inhabited by men, the underwater realm is inhabited by fish that act as if they were men. In the course of the mythological narratives the realms become separated. This appears only as a minor obstruction, since communication between the realms is still almost effortlessly possible. Across the sea there is the land of *Tokoyo*. How this land can be reached and where it lies is unclear. The Land of *Yomi* is the Underworld. It is ruled by Izanami and Susano-wo. Yomi is dark and even devoid of colors. The dead here reside in halls, while "their torment, if such there is, consists of being separated from their former lives and particularly from their loved ones and friends."[60] There is neither punishment, nor reward to be found after death. As such, it is a prime example of a "low grid, weak group" cosmology. Tokoyo is also sometimes understood to be the realm of the dead. "The Japanese have been debating for centuries over the location and character of that land. There are two major categories of answers: it is a land beyond the sea and mountains (this reflects a horizontal view of the universe), or a land under the earth and above (a vertical view of the universe)."[61] How these two realms of death are related then is not clear, neither is it certain how the vertical and horizontal are to be related. Some propose that the land of Tokoyo is of our time, has little structural relation to even the mythic dimensions of history and that transits between the world just happen and have little extraneous motivation.[62]

Borders in these texts are mentioned, while deities created and presumably maintained them. Despite these occasional instances of explicit limits, they seem to play a small role. When a deity has to visit Yomi, it has no trouble arriving there. Those of the other world however are not allowed to travel past the border between Yomi and the earth. All those that undertake travels starting at the center of the realm are free to go where they please. Nature is not hostile. Rather the world is a place in which heroes can realize themselves. Not only nature, but also neighboring tribes are neither especially hostile nor

[60] Ibid., p. 104.

[61] Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry,* p. 201.

[62] Ellwood, "Cargo-Cult", p. 335.

ineligible for marriage. Deities constantly travel in order to marry somebody foreign. At times they even stay for many years in the foreign lands, before they (can) return. As I will elaborate later, it is in the kind of openness that the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki differ. In the "Age of the Gods" part of the Nihon Shoki foreigners appear to be subservient beyond all measures, though they rarely become parts of the main lineage. In the later parts, which are clearly modeled on the Chinese historico-literary tradition, those at the periphery are constructed as Others thereby justifying their subjugation.[63] In the Kojiki some kind of integration is generally achieved. Thus, even though both texts are products of a "low grid, weak group" type of society, this leaves enough room to engender small changes into the imagination of a symbolic system, especially with regard to the erection of boundaries.

3. Analyzing Myth Sequences

3.1. Method

I hope to have by now delineated (in time and within society) the segment of Early Japanese society whom the chronicles can be said to represent. Before I present an analysis of myth sequences of exile, I would like to write a few words about the method and the selection. Although I have up to now mostly referred to the whole chronicles, I must due to spatial restrictions limit myself to a study of the first book of each literary work. In both cases these books are called "The Age of the Gods". Narratives of exile take up the larger part of stories before the first emperor's legendary rule, but become increasingly rare as the chronicles progress.[64] I define exile as a *sojourn in the periphery for an uncertain period of time coupled with a necessary movement away from the center to this periphery prompted by a voluntary or forced expulsion*. I will not consider genealogical questions, a there are many narratives in which the descendants of *Amaterasu*, held to be the main deity of the imperial lineage, do not appear at all.[65]

[63] Bialock, *Eccentric Spaces*, p. 119.

[64] The theme of exile is still present, but rarely elaborated upon and therefore difficult to analyze.

As I have already mentioned, he editors decided to include only some narratives and even these were compiled idiosyncratically.[66] The selection is not arbitrary, even though on a surface reading could easily result in bewilderment at the many digressions and inconsistencies. But it is exactly this "all-pervasiveness and random incidence of such inconsistency which makes these 'historical' texts appropriate material for structural analysis, for, under these randomized conditions, the underlying structure of the story ceases to be under the control of the editors and generates a momentum of its own."[67] A structuralist interpretation of myth attempts to understand the relationship of the various instances of contradicting inconsistencies in a text. Most of the inconsistencies found in the chronicles appear to be merely inconsistencies, especially if one is to read the society as I have suggested above. Agents in these competitive social structures feel little need to create and clarify elaborate accounts of how the world works. I will here attempt to read myth-sequences of exile as a structuralist, even though this is far from common in Japanese studies.[68]

To save space, I here recount the important myth sequences in my own words.[69] The only names I use are those that appear repeatedly within the recounted narratives. The only clear distinction between the deities as agents made in the texts is between heavenly, earthly and sea deities. This division is made because of where they reside in the mythical landscape and on account of any qualities associated in them. Indeed, the deities appear primarily as individual agents without having any special symbols assigned. In my analysis I will come to the conclusion that if there is any anti-structure discernible at all, I will have to seek it in individuals qua agents.

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[65] Indeed the importance of Amaterasu herself is disputed. (cf. Breen and Teeuwen, *History of Shinto*, p. 135.)

[66] Isomae, *Hermeneutics on Scripture,* p. 40.

[67] Leach, *Genesis as Myth,* p. 45.

[68] To my knowledge, there is only one attempt at such a structural analysis of Ancient Japanese texts. (see Henrietta de Veer, "Myth Sequences from the Kojiki", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 3.2-3 (1976): 175–214.) The author concludes that the underlying theme of the text is the attempt to understand what defines mankind as mankind. This is a seemingly unresolvable paradox given the changing nature of life (eg. food rots and rotten food gives way to new life).

[69] Based on the translation by Donald Phillipi, *Kojiki*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1968.

3.2. Exile in the Kojiki

A reader of the Kojiki can get the impression that nobody ever rests. In the majority of stories characters are journeying around the Japanese islands and to heaven or the underworld. Nevertheless it is rarely certain what realm they are moving in and what parts of Japan have already been created. Even when they settle down in a newly built palace, they do so mainly to procreate and thus create a new generation of wanderers. Narratives fitting the above definition of exile follow the basic pattern of expulsion, journey and reintegration. The journeymen are often integrated into the structure of the other, the periphery, but generally return back to their 'original' home. An integration in the periphery happens via marriage and although the conditions of their marriages differ, usually they return with a bride and through her integrate the periphery into the power-structure of their homes. The image of crossing boundaries appears repeatedly throughout the sequences, as many scenes are located at beaches, on rivers, etc. However I find it difficult to see the sojourn in exile as a sojourn in an anti-structure. This comes with little surprise if the cosmology of the Kojiki's authors is one of strong competition and the approach to nature and abroad is one of openness.[70] I expect the anti-structure, if there is one, to be a non-geographical category.

The first myth-sequence fulfilling the thematic requirements follows *Susano-wo* as he is finally exiled from the heavenly realm and wanders the Central Land of the Reed Plains.

> Susano-wo is expelled because of his transgressive acts and descends to the upper reaches of the Hi river. A chopstick floating down a river shows him that people are to be found upstream. He meets an old man, the son of an earthly deity and learns that a dragon comes every year to eat one of his daughters. Susano-wo then asks for the hand of the old man's last daughter. The local agrees after learning about Susano-wo. The descended god thereafter outwits and kills the dragon. His own sword is destroyed, but in the dragon's tail he

[70] Douglas, “Cultural Bias,” p. 211 ff.

> finds the sword *Kusanagi.* This he presents to Amaterasu. Then he builds a palace in the land of Izumo, where he killed the dragon. The episode ends with a list of his offspring.[71]

At the start of this sequence is an expulsion, because the situation in the High Realm of Heaven has become untenable. In heaven, although he is tolerated there at first, his acts are a prime example of anti-structural behavior. He is too strong to be contained and has to leave. Susano-wo in his subsequent wanderings appears as an inverse of his former destructive-transgressive self. Here he helps those he meets. Up to this point, there has been no mention in the Kojiki narrative of non-heavenly deities.[72] Susano-wo marries the daughter, who herself has nothing to say in this decision. Then he kills the dragon that is a animal-kami which in its own way enables the main character's marriage. He then reestablishes contact with the heavenly realm, which he had left, by offering the sword Kusanagi. The building of a palace and subsequent procreation enables this no longer ambivalent character to integrate the periphery. He is now both from Izumo and from the High Heavenly Plain. The link to heaven via the sword Kusanagi however is tenuous at best and his offspring in the subsequent myth-sequences represents the earthly deities. He must be rejected, because he is allied too strongly with the periphery.

In the next fitting sequence, the main agent is Susano-wo's sixth generation descendant, the deity *Ōkuninushi*.

> Ōkuninushi is the youngest of many brothers. He is subservient and his brothers take him as their attendant to a far land in search of the hand of a princess. On the way there the older brothers meet a skinned rabbit, who asks their help. They give him false counsel and the rabbit suffers even more. Ōkuninushi, following his brothers, comes upon the same rabbit and gives him good counsel. In return the rabbit prophesies that it will be the youngest

[71] Summary Book I, chap. 19–20.

[72] Interpreters do speculate that e.g. earthly deities are those born of Izanagi and Izanami but not "assigned" to heaven (Ashkenazi, "Handbook", p. 141). The source material however does not give enough evidence to support such an interpretation.

> brother, who will marry the sought after woman. During the sojourn in the periphery the prophesy comes true. Angered, his older brothers try to kill him three times. With the help of his aunt he manages to escape.[73]

Ōkuninushi is set up as an ambivalent character from the start, because although he is serving his older brothers, it is written that they will cede their lands to him. He is in effect too weak, even though he should not be. He is made to travel, similarly to Susano-wo, who is expelled and thus has to travel. The animal kami (rabbit) enables the marriage. Here however, the situation is the inverse of before (helping the rabbit vs. slaying the dragon). This leads to a marriage which appears to be the decision of Yagami-hime. This situation however does not lead to a successful integration back home, as to save his life, he has to go into exile to an unspecified place. Although he has managed to integrate into the local system, without the explicit approval of the father-in-law, Ōkuninushi cannot be reintegrated at home, for he is still too weak and must take flight.

> Ōkuninushi is now told to visit Susano-wo in Yomi.[74] Ōkuninushi journeys to the place where his ancestor dwells and remains there for an uncertain amount of time. In this subterranean realm he meets the deity's daughter, they look at each other and become man and wife. She then tells her father about the young guest. Susano-wo however presents his son-in-law with three deadly trials. The first night, he had to sleep in a chamber of snakes. The second in a chamber of centipedes and bees. In the last trial, Susano-wo shoots an arrow into a large plain and tells Ōkuninushi to fetch it. However, he also sets fire to that plain. This time a mouse appears and her counsel enables him to survive and bring the arrow back. After seeing the arrow, Susano-wo takes his son-in-law inside and asks him to clean his hair of lice. These are actually centipedes. With the help of the daughter, Ōkuninushi manages to deceive the deity and escape. Because of a mishap, Susano-wo notices them and sets out to pursue the pair. Managing to pass the border of Yomi, Susano-wo shouts after him, telling him

[73] Summary Book I, chap. 21–22.

[74] Nowhere is it written how and when Susano-wo arrived there, after the events in chap. 20.

> that he will subdue his older brothers. These then cede their lands to Ōkuninushi and he builds a palace.[75]

The sequence again takes its beginning with an expulsion of sorts. The originator of the command "you must go to..." is unclear, just as it is impossible to determine, where the scene takes place.[76] An animal kami (mouse) here appears only after the couple sets eyes on each other. Still, without the animal's help, Ōkuninushi would not have been able to overcome the obstacles and solidify his marriage. The marriage itself is presented as a mutual decision without the approval of the father. There can be no local integration in the other realm, but the journey results in his taking of power at "home". The weak servant has finally become an agent fit to rule at home. A connection between two realms is retained by his wife. This happens even though the earth and the Underworld have already been separated. Borders are not important when seen from the center. The father-in-law is now supportive of the marriage, which enables Ōkuninushi to overcome his brothers.

A little later, *Takamimusubi* and Amaterasu, the two main heavenly deities in this myth sequence, decide their offspring is to rule the Central Land of the Reed Plains. However, the earthly deities, led by Ōkuninushi, are said to be in uproar, unwilling to cede their lands.

> The first deity sent to pacify the lands does not return for three years. Then it is decided another deity is to be dispatched. This deity however takes as wife the daughter of Ōkuninushi and does not return for eight years. To learn what is going on, a pheasant is sent to earth. The wife of the descended deity tells him to shoot it to death, which he does. The arrow flies back to the heavens. The heavenly deities send it back, stating that only if the arrow was shot by a deity wanting to do evil, it would strike the deity. Therefore the descended deity was killed by that arrow.[77]

[75] Summary Book I, chap. 23– 24.

[76] Phillipi, *Kojiki*, p. 98.

[77] Summary Book I, chap. 32–33.

The topographic center of this narrative is the heavenly realm. From there deities are dispatched to earth, but do not return. Theirs is an exile in which links with home are severed. The deities sent to earth have an uncertain position in heaven, as evidenced by the choice to dispatch them. The marriage of the second deity is agreed upon by all participants (groom, wife, father), suggesting an integration into the other, which does not enable contact with home. Now, the animal kami (pheasant) cannot ensure the stability of the situation. The exiled has allied himself too strongly with the other. This however is not a possible solution. Therefore only death ensues. The possibility of procreation is eliminated. The deity has not successfully transformed into an unambiguous agent of the center.

A situation like this is hardly tenable. Borders cannot be closed. Independence should not be possible.

> A further deity is dispatched and accompanied by another one. The pair goes, with sword in hand, straight to Ōkuninushi to demand his intentions with regard to the rule of Amaterasu's offspring. The earth deity however mentions that only his son can answer that. After they find him on his fishing boat, the son tells his father that they should present their land to the heavenly deities. However, he also goes into hiding. So the pair seek out a second son, who at first resists, but cedes the land, when faced with the heavenly deity's strength. Ōkuninushi now only requires that one of his children becomes the vanguard of the heavenly deities and that he himself shall be worshiped in his land, even after ceding it. The two deities spend some time on earth. After their return, the child of the heir apparent (as a double) is designated to rule on earth. He is accompanied by an earth deity, which came to guide them. On earth, the dispatched deity erects a palace and later takes a wife.[78]

[78] Summary Book I, chap. 35–40.

The sequence again begins with an "expulsion" of sorts, in which a deity is sequestered from the group and sent to another land. To ensure a continuing exchange with home, a second deity is to accompany him. In the Central Land of Reed Plains, they meet with the ruling deity, who cannot decide and defers the answer to his sons. This is an inversion of meeting with a daughter whose fate the father decides. An integration via the daughter has proven impossible. The land is ceded only by the use of force, even though there is a sense of voluntary agreement to the results of the subjugation. The integration is sealed with one of Ōkuninushi's children becoming the vanguard of the heavenly deities. However, because of its earthly origin this deity cannot become a part of the heavenly realm. The animal kami (shellfish) here instead of mediating an integration for those from the center ensures its impossibility for those originating from the periphery. The land is integrated, but the locals are in effect derived of their power. A new palace is built. Procreation is possible for the heavenly deities only. The child of the heir apparent is a double of the heir himself, who is again doubled by the two deities dispatched pacify the land.

One of the most famous sequences follows the hunter *Ho-ori*'s inauspicious career as a fisherman.

> *Hoderi* and his younger brother Ho-ori are sons of the first descended emperor. The older brother is a fisherman and the younger a hunter. It is the latter who proposes to exchange their lucks. None of the brothers is lucky. Ho-ori cannot catch a single fish and even loses the fishing hook. The older brother insists on being returned his hook. Ho-ori then breaks his sword and makes five hundred hooks, but this is not enough. When the younger brother is weeping and lamenting by the seashore, somebody comes and asks him, why he weeps. Ho-ori tells his story and then receives counsel on where to go and what to do. He sets out in a small boat and arrives at the underwater palace of a sea deity. There, following the counsel, he climbs a tree and waits there. When a maiden comes out to fetch water, she sees him in a reflection and calls the sea deity's daughter. They look at each other lovingly and become man and wife. She then

> presents her husband to the father, who confirms the marriage. For three years Ho-ori lives in this land. One day Ho-ori sighs in memory of his life on earth. His wife and father-in-law then learn the reason for his sighs. The sea deity then summons all fish and in the end learns that the sea-bream has the hook still in its mouth. After retrieving the hook, the father-in-law summons crocodiles and one of the brings Ho-ori back to earth. He is also given helpful items as well as counsel on how to overcome his brother. Back on earth Ho-ori can assert his prominence and his older brother is forced to vow to serve him. In the meantime his pregnant wife decided it would be unfitting for a child of the heavenly deities to be born in the ocean. Due to the advanced pregnancy, the hut built for her is not yet finished, when she is giving birth. She asks her husband to not look at her. He does not heed her plea and sees her true giant crocodile form in the moment of birth. Then he runs away. His wife decides to return to her home, leaving her son on earth with his father. Thus she closes the sea border. Nevertheless the bond with her son is strong, wherefore she sends her younger sister to care for him. Ho-ori's son then had children with his aunt.[79]

The story begins in a situation in which both brothers share the same power, but are not recognized as legitimate offspring. They are thus ambivalent and neither can claim legitimate rule. An inversion of their situation leads to the expulsion of the younger brother. A person appears (unspecified, but equivalent to the animal kami) and ensures the integration into the peripheral order. The marriage is a mutual decision made by the lovers and the father later approves of it. The integration into the peripheral order seems complete. The situation nevertheless proves to be unstable. As opposed to the narrative featuring the pheasant, links to the homeland are not severed. Rather, they persist in the protagonist's memory. After a lengthy sojourn, he departs (by approval) to return home. The animal kami (crocodile) here enables his safe return with no desire to remain in the center. With the power of the sea-deity the protagonist emerges as the rightful ruler. But he

[79] Summary Book I, chap. 41–45.

had already procreated in the palace under the sea. The link to the other would be too strong, and his wife has to leave. A link between the two is maintained through her sister.

The central issue of these sequences is how to ensure that in a situation, where there is numerous offspring that they will not ally themselves with another power-structure. But because these princes are powerful due to their ambivalent position,[80] they are a fitting way of securing the integration of a periphery. What is clarified via their sojourns in the peripheral areas is their succession to power. What is mediated in these sequences is the problem of succession. A possible ruler has to be ambivalent, not only due to position as one among many possible inheritors, but also because he has to be better and often more cruel than the rest. But such an ambivalent (too strong/too weak/exceptional) agent is hardly fitting to be the holder of the supreme power. He must at the same time be different from the rest and the bearer of the system. This question is likely one to be prevalent among larger parts of Early Japanese society, as even though a "low grid, weak group" organization forms a large part of it, there is also the need and the tradition of a continuous rule (be it the office of the emperor or a most prominent clan member). The stories are also accounts of individuals using any means possible to attain what they desire.

Lastly, the status of the periphery is uncertain and it only becomes 'the other' if its integration is not successful. Should one of the possible and ambivalent successors become integrated too strongly into the periphery, then the links to home will be severed. As in the myth sequence, in which the first two heavenly deities descend to earth, the exile's position is no longer ambivalent. As a 'traitor', he must die. Again, the problem is one of overcoming the centripetal force of a clan system, which threatens to dissolve a centralizing rule interested in upholding their tradition. The offspring of a lineage competes for dominance, which threatens the order. Any progeny in a competitive society without hereditary rules takes on an anti-structural nature (from the point of view of a central authority). But one of them will have to become structure. This dilemma is, at least

[80] Masao Yamaguchi, "The Dual Structure of Japanese Emperorship", *Current Anthropology* 28.4. (1987): S5–S11, p. S8.

in the studied myth sequences, solved via an (unexplained) change of character when away.

3.3. Exile in the Nihon Shoki

All myth sequences in the Nihon Shoki are accompanied by many variants. Additionally, even in the main version, many different names are commonly listed. The "Age of the Gods" features fewer myth sequences of exile and fewer sequences altogether. I will recount summaries of the main versions and in my commentaries expand on important variations found in the alternatives. These at times differ somewhat radically in some of the actions of the protagonists as well as in narrative details. Most elaborations bear little impact on the basic structure of exile.

> After being expelled from heaven, Susano-wo hears a weeping and wailing sound, which he follows until he meets an older man and woman. They are the country's gods and a serpent is eating their children. Susano-wo asks to marry their youngest daughter, to which all agree. He then tricks the dragon and kills it. From its tail he takes a sword and submits it to the gods of heaven. He then builds a palace and procreates. At last he leaves for the Underworld.[81]

The main thrust of the story matches the one found in the Kojiki. Next to this version, there are five more recorded in the Kojiki. They tend to be much more concise in their storytelling and at times elaborate on an aspect not found in the main version. Version five is the only extended account and it differs in an important aspect, because it lacks the motif of integration into a peripheral order. There is no marriage between Susano-wo and a daughter of local deities, despite his sojourn on earth. Also, Susano-wo at first lives in Korean *Silla*, then proceeds to kill the dragon in Izumo. This is not a narrative of the Yamato court. After presenting the sword Kusanagi to his sister Amaterasu, he goes on to plant trees in Yamato, which reads like civilizing mission undertaken from Izumo.

[81] Summary Book I, sect. 8.

The stories surrounding Ōkuninushi are not featured in the Nihon Shoki. The descent by deities from heaven to an earth in uproar itself is similar to the one found in the Kojiki. The second descending deity that is the one who shoots the pheasant, has a more elaborate back story. Also, the narrative begins with a list of aliases of the deity Ōkuninushi. Here I only recount the differences.

> The deity shot by the arrow from heaven has a wife in heaven, who mourns him, collects his remains and carries out a funeral. An old friend of hers arrives, looking like her deceased husband. He is angry for being mistaken for the dead man and cuts down the mourning hut. Ōkuninushi here has only one son. Because his son withdraws, when asked if he would yield the land, so does Ōkuninushi. He also states that the other earthly deities now will do so. He gives the heavenly deities his sword to support his statement. The two then killed all the remaining unruly gods and reported their results after ascending back to heaven.[82]

The complicated process of integration, subjugation and approval of the Kojiki is nowhere to be seen. The episode concerning mistaken identities has little bearing on the theme of exile and reads like an etiological myth. The incorporation of the earth deity's lands and those of his followers is presented from the point of view of a confident civilization. The world is still an open space in which individuals seek to realize themselves. All other versions of this section, when they are extensive enough, share the motif of immediate submission by the periphery. Ōkuninushi, his family and other earth deities yield almost immediately after being asked to do so and are not made part of the ruling structure. Those, who do not yield, become representatives of an anti-structure and are simply vanquished. None of the animal kami who enable an integration into the peripheral order appear. No representatives of the peripheral order create a link to the center. The cosmology appears to be one in which a group's boundaries are stronger. Version seven differs in that two pheasants are dispatched and while the first does not return, the second is shot, but only wounded and brings the arrow back to heaven. This is

[82] Summary Book I, sect. 9.

followed by an unproblematic offering of lands to a new descending deity. The first descending deities do not return, but it does not play out as an alliance with an enemy, but only as a story of deities not returning.

The story of the two brothers forms, similarly to the Kojiki, the most extensive narrative of the chronicle.

> Both brothers decide they want to exchange their talents. The younger brother goes on to lose the fishhook. When the younger brother is weeping by the seaside, he meets *Shiotsutsu no Oji*, who sinks him into the sea. He does in no way mention that he will help him wed the daughter or help him get the fishhook. In front of the palace, *Hiko Hohoemi* (Ho-ori) hides in a Katsura tree. A daughter of the sea-deity comes out to draw water and sees him in the reflection. She returns to her parents (not talking to him) and tells them about the man in the tree. The deity and his spouse invite the visitor and he tells them, why he has come. Then they find the fishhook after calling all fishes, who tell them about one that has a sore mouth. Then, almost as an afterthought, a reader learns that the protagonist marries the daughter of the sea deity. After three years, he sighs remembering life on earth and his wife asks her father to help her spouse. The father-in-law then tells the protagonist the same counsel as in the Kojiki. However no mention is made of the crocodiles. Back home, his brother "naturally surrenders". It was mentioned before that his wife was pregnant. Again she requests to not be looked upon. This time, there is no mention of a hut. After the transgression, she leaves, closing the path to the sea. The child is said to have collapsed after a long time. No mention is made of his aunt coming back.[83]

For the first time a retelling fits the general theme of exile. Some of the more prominent motifs as written in the Kojiki are absent. Even integration into the peripheral order appears. However, a daughter is not mentioned. Ho-ori and the parents are the sole

[83] Summary Book I, sect. 10.

agents. The mediating kami, here more apparently non-animal, does nothing but send the hunter below sea. There is no mention of him giving advice to help the integration. What ties this version in with the aforementioned sections of the Nihon Shoki, becomes apparent when the younger brother returns to earth and his older brother immediately submits. While Ho-ori did learn how to outsmart his older brother and thus assert his power, this has little bearing on their confrontation. Also, importantly, no link between the two realms is maintained. Version two on the other hand is an almost exact retelling of the Kojiki version, bar one important difference. The scene in the palace of the sea-deity reads as if they were expecting the arrival of the august grandchild. Again, there is no integration of representatives of the peripheral order into the one of the center. Only the peripheral land is made part of the realm. Boundaries are erected and maintained.[84]

In most versions the world is an open space for agents to realize themselves in. A narrative centered on actions however is less pronounced in all sequences. Borders and differences are upheld to a much higher degree compared with the older chronicle. All other lands simply yield to the glory of those at the center of the narrative topography. The world witnessed here is strongly influenced by the imagination of the tenka regime, in which an accepted Yamato sovereignty is imagined as extending far beyond its real borders. Even the progeny's anti-structural typology and its subsequent transformation into structure is less pronounced in most versions and lacking in some.

4. Conclusion

While the two chronicles were edited and finished within 8 years of each other, they offer differing imaginations of the same stories. Shared cosmological underpinnings are discernible. The Nihon Shoki however features many more elements, which correlate with a stronger hierarchy and more pronouncedly maintained borders. Even the individuality of acting agents is more subdued compared to the Kojiki. A cosmology with a less pronounced stress on the individual, but with greater emphasis on society and shared ritual, will not have to deal with the problem of an anti-structural progeny becoming the epitome of structure. Anti-structure will be increasingly located beyond the borders of a

[84] Book I, sect. 10, vers. 4 is an exception.

community and formal, external displays of identity will gain significance. I do not want to imply that the society of the Yamato court had changed in this direction. There is not enough data to support such a claim, especially as many traits of a cosmology correlating with a competitive society are still present. Rather I think that the editors desired to negotiate a different cosmology for their society.

Subsequent history shows that the imagination of the Nihon Shoki was much closer to the later development of the society than the one in the Kojiki. The more expressively hierarchical and self-centered conceptualization of the Yamato society is a most prominent model for interpreting Japanese society even today. I have however attempted to stress the aspects that are not commonly recognized as being a part of "Japanese identity". These new findings are perhaps not peculiar to the times I studied here. The infamous rapid modernization of the Japanese archipelago may draw on precisely the narratives and symbols I have studied here.

On another level, the narratives found in these literary works, can be seen as paradigmatic models of and for behavior. Combined with the analysis of exile they tell us something about how the Yamato state managed to expand. In order to be accepted by other clans, these cosmologies were to be transported by a symbolic structure drawing on commonly shared mythological motifs. The lack of interest in the Kojiki however shows that the use of shared symbols does not necessitate the acceptance of any differing world-view by others. The chronicles appear to have originated in a society (Yamato aristocracy) still defined by its openness and fluidity, which was also a society eager to accommodate continental knowledge and symbolism. As the status of chronicles changed, so did the imagination of exile and ways of integration of the peripheral and the foreign. While the practice of dispatching members of the ruling lineage to distant regions is attested in the latter, historical parts of the chronicles, it is not present in the form of elaborate narratives. This shows that "events of mythical narratives came to be lived out in history,"[85] as at least ten princes were banished between the 6th and 9th centuries. But as societies change, they will extract different information from the same textual sources.

The methodology proposed by Mary Douglas is a useful tool for grasping the social conditions which influenced producers of written records. It can help to evade, at least

[85] Yamaguchi, "Dual Structure", p. S8

partly, interpretations of ancient textual sources based on an interpretive history much younger than the texts themselves. While working on this paper I was astonished at my findings, since they go against the grain of the common tropes through which Japan and its past are imagined. My reading is not exhaustive of neither the chronicles, nor the then-current society, especially because I accentuated the competitive aspect to the detriment of the more formalized and ritualized one. But because a society at any given time is made up of different individuals, traditions and institutions, any description is necessarily partial. In order to return to where I started, I want to remind the reader that later imaginations of exile did localize anti-structure as related to exile more unambiguously in geographical terms.[86] The nigh border-less world of these earliest of texts however feels closer to the one we live in now. It is one, in which institutions and traditions attempt to counteract the strongly destabilizing tendencies of extreme individualism. The world too is often imagined as a place for tourists to explore, while local conditions are ignored. A close study of a society that is commonly understood as entirely foreign to ours might thus lead to results that are remarkably close to home.

[86] Stockdale, "Imagination of Exile", p. 239.

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